Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXVIII NO. 7 & 8 JUL. - AUG. 1988

N E W S L E T T E R

F O R B I R D W A T C H E R S

VOL. XXVIII No.7 & 8 July-August 1988

C O N T E N T S

Editorial:

Competition for Industrial Houses

There has been a mixed reaction to the suggestion to have a prize for those Companies which have created bird sanctuaries around their establishments. Sumant Moolgaokar feels that we must 'catch them young', and have an innovative programme for motivating young children to get interested in birds. Dr. Miss Rachel Reuben thinks "it is a good idea".

The first thing to do is to identify those Companies which have created bird sanctuaries and establish contact with the Managers who have taken this initiative. Our readers are requested to write in about what they know on this subject.

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Reafforesting Our Hills

The article by Syed Asad Akhtar shows that the most eroded land can be revegetated. I am familiar with the area of the Seven Hills (as they were known during my boyhood) which have been so imaginatively rejuvenated by BARC. I believe there was a scheme to plant up the other eroded hills around Bombay. But first a decision must be taken not to destroy these hills by quarrying. This seems to be a tall order under present circumstances. If this could be done we could again restore these mountains by using what is left of them as rubbish dumps - as the Germans did after the war, and create them anew. This would also solve the problem of finding areas for dumping city refuse - which has become such a problem today. Does this seem fanciful?

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Forest Decline Raises Toll of Birdlife

The New Scientist of 14.7.88 refers to a recent report of the International Council for Bird Preservation. Apparently out of the approximately 9000 species of birds, as many as 1029 face extinction. What is distressing is that these figures are a big increase over the assessment made 10 years ago. At that time only 290 species were threatened. The New Scientist report goes on to say :

"The tropics have seen the greatest change. In Africa, the number of threatened species has risen to 170 from 65. In Brazil, there were 29 endangered species in 1978, but 121 today. More than half, 64 species, live in the severely threatened Atlantic rainforest north of Rio de Janeiro. Worst hit is Indonesia, with 126 endangered species today, compared with 14 a decade ago.

Parrots, which usually live in lowland forests, suffer most as trees are felled. The number of endangered parrots has almost doubled in the past 10 years. The council is using parrots as "flagship" species to preserve large areas and all the animals and plants they support.

"When you haven't got pandas, parrots are the next best thing," said Sue Wells at the council. This approach worked well on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, and is in use in neighbouring Dominica.

Illegal trade in exotic species of bird is another important threat. The Bali starling, for example, declined from about 500 birds in 1978 to about 55 in 1988, despite the fact that its entire range is inside a national park. Illegal trapping was mostly to blame."

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Articles

Birds in my Garden by M.K. Himmatsinhji (continued),
Jubilee Ground, Bhuj, Kutch - 370 001

Black Drongo or Kingcrow (Dicrurus adsimilis)

A pair arrives regularly at the beginning of the hot weather. They are the earliest birds to start calling before dawn. They build their delicate nest every season which appears too small to accommodate these birds. I have seen young drongo falling out of their nest more than once.

Blackheaded or Brahminy Myna (Sturnus pagodarum)

These mynas are always about. Either a single one or a pair come along. Once or twice I saw (to be exact, 50 on 19.2.73, and 30 on 21.2.73) parties of these birds congregate on the electric wires in my grounds in the evening. They were perhaps on local migration. It is a pretty sight seeing a Brahminy Myna raise its black crest. While it does this it sings the limited repertoire of its songs. At times a pair of them get together on top of a tree or a roof and greet each other with heads bowed and crests raised. When feeding chicks an odd pair or two come to the beds of freshly cut lucerne (Alfa alfa) and cram their beaks with hoppers and other insects and fly off, making several such trips to and fro.

Common Myna (Acridotheres tristis)

A pair is generally resident here and tries to breed in one of my four wells, but I have yet to see them successfully raise a brood which leaves their nest in the well. I see the parent birds carrying food down, and I also hear the chicks begging calls. However, all these activities come to a halt and the young mynas never seem to fly out of the well. Whether due to the depth of the well the fully fledged chicks are unable to fly up and out of it, or this is due to some other reasons still remains a mystery for me.

Bank Myna (Acridotheres ginginianus)

Otherwise seen irregularly, but during the breeding season these mynas, while feeding nestlings, come day after day to feed from the beds of green fodder and to take food for their offspring. Sometimes the young also

accompany their parents and are fed on the spot. Like the other cousins of theirs, the Bank Mynas too pick up so many hoppers and other insects at one go that it would appear that their bills would hold no more, and yet they go on picking up more and more without dropping a single item of the food picked up and tightly packed in the beak!

The Bank Myna is a pretty bird with its bluish-brown-grey plumage, orange bill and the naked skin around the eyes of the same colour with the pinkish buff wing patches giving a finer touch to the elegance of its plumage.

House Crow (Corvus splendens)

This ubiquitous fiend of a bird is of course present in my compound. He is forever on the look out for birds' nests and young for whom he is the most destructive element in the habitat here (Salim Ali in 'The Birds of Kutch', described his tribe as "scheming blackguards"!); and yet he is a part of the scheme of nature! There are about 5+ pairs present who often during the day are joined by visitors from outside. Most of these pairs invariably have Koel chicks to look after. Then again, I have been noticing for the last few years that both the Crow and Koel chicks fall out of the nests at the age of a couple of weeks and die. Whether this phenomenon is due to the little ones not getting enough to eat, or whether it is caused by the adults bringing food materials contaminated by poisonous substances is a matter for investigation. I feel that the latter reason appears more plausible.

Common Wood Shrike (Tephrodornis pondicerianus)

One pair of these birds is present, but they periodically disappear. Once in a while, particularly in the hot weather, some more individuals arrive and get busy hunting for insects in my mango and other trees. Giving out constant contact calls keep the party together and also announce their presence to me.

The prevailing drought in Kutch has perforce brought about a change in the behaviour pattern of the Wood Shrike. This chiefly arborial bird has had to come down quite often to the ground to feed. I watched the resident pair hop about on the ground and even take short flying hops to feed on insect life which provided me a rare opportunity to study the altered behaviour of a bird species under stress.

Large Cuckoo Shrike (Coracina novaehollandiae)

Resident in Saurashtra, North Gujarat, in wooded areas of Banaskantha district, Mt. Abu, etc., this Cuckoo Shrike is a vagrant in Kutch. I recorded it for the first time in this district near Mandvi on 16 Nov. '68, in my grounds on 19.11.86, 1.2.87, 25.3.87 and 1.2.88. It attracts one's attention by its call reminiscent of that of the Alexandrine Parakeet. I heard the call of this bird as well as the alarm calls of the Grey Partridge. So I went to investigate the cause of this commotion. The partridges were calling agitatedly and the cuckoo shrike, perched on top of a dried up mango tree was repeatedly diving at something in the grass and going up again to its perch. On closer inspection in the grass the cause of this excitement turned out to be a domestic cat which was stalking the partridge covey who had three chicks with them!

Small Minivet (Pericrocotus cinnamomeus)

Seen intermittantly throughout the year, but one pair comes during the breeding season and I feel they build a nest which I have so far failed to locate.

Marshall's Iora (Aegithina nigrolutea)

Its musical calls and, more often, the short contact calls generally attract attention. In this species the males courtship display is quite pretty. He flies straight up from his perch on a tree, then stopping in midair and all the while uttering a continuous call he displays his white rump feathers puffed out like a ball of fluff. He then comes down straight, or sometimes in a spiral motion.

Whitecheeked Bulbul (Picnonotus leucogenys)

This bulbul was formerly called the 'white-eared bulbul' (they might as well have called it Yellowvented!). It is always there except in the breeding season when it departs to a habitat favoured by it in the scrub jungle, or whatever is left of it, to raise its family. The half a dozen or more of these birds found in my grounds are very fond of having a bath which they do towards late evenings in the water channels.

Redvented Bulbul (Picnonotus cafer)

Not more than two or three pairs present. A pair builds a nest but not regularly every year.

Common Babbler (Turdoides caudatus)

A party of these babblers are there now and then on the periphery of my compound, and rarely come right inside.

Franklin's Wren-Warbler (Prinia hodgsonii)

This little fellow is well represented with 4+ pairs generally present. They often go in a party foraging for insects in the foliage of trees as also in hedges all the while giving their ti-ti-ti... calls. Principally during, and occasionally at other times, the male perches on the highest point of a tree or of a bush and also on electric and telegraph wires and from there renders his seemingly unending ti-ti... or tsi-tsi-tsi-which-which-which... song with great verve. The male also indulges in sort of loops and nose dives repeated in quick succession, and this too is carried out frequently with the accompaniment of his nuptial song. A couple of pairs breed in my grounds after the rains break and by which time the low shrubbery develops largish leaves. The location of the nest is fairly low down and it is similar to the nest of the Tailor Bird.

Rufusfronted Wren-Warbler (Prinia buchanani)

Used to come occasionally, but now not at all.

Plain Wren-Warbler (Prinia subflava)

Formerly known as the Indian Wren-Warbler (Prinia inornata terricolor), this bird is there in my grounds every now and then. A pair arrives at the end of the rainy season and is more or less seen throughout the cold season at the end of which it moves away. Curiously this warbler is dull earthy brown above in summer, but in winter it assumes a more rufus tinge and some individuals are darker buff below.

Tailor Bird (Orthotomus sutorius)

One pair is permanently there and raises a brood fairly regularly every season which when fully fledged and independent, leave my garden.

Indian Great Reed Warbler (Acrocephalus stentoreus)

It is likely to breed in Kutch. One bird arrives regularly in my place in March-April, and at times stays on till May when I hear its odd sounding song.

Indian Robin (Saxicoloides fulicata)

A couple of pairs of this bird are present, but only one of them breeds, building their nest in the old compound wall.

Whitewinged Black Tit (Parus nuchalis)

Not seen at least for over two decades, nor have I come across it recently during my birdwatching trips.

Purple Sunbird (Nectarinia asiatica)

A couple of pairs present, and at least one of these successfully bring up a family.

White-eye (Zosterops palpebrosa)

This pretty little bird did not figure in the Kutch list till I saw a party of 8+ of them near Mandvi on 1.1.66. Thereafter I met with them in the same place more than once. The White-eyes arrived in my garden for the first time recently. I saw one bird on 18.11.87. and thereafter saw the other bird too. They were seen mostly on two of the eucalyptus trees I have here. The nearest known range of this species include Saurashtra and Karachi (Sind) where it is found in the Mangrove Spp. Therefore it is likely that the bird extended its range into the creeks of Kutch from Saurashtra or southwards from Sind. The mangrove is being steadily decimated, and this, to my mind, may be a possible reason for the White-eye to have moved inland.

House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)

The 12+ birds present have neither come into my house nor do they enter any of the other buildings for the last 15 years or more, but stay in the now unused well and nest there too. In their case also, I see the birds carrying

in food and I hear the chicks begging for food down below who eventually do not come out of the well! This conundrum is yet to be solved.

Yellowthroated Sparrow (Petronia xanthocollis)

An odd bird used to be seen occasionally, but they do not come any more to my grounds.

Baya (Ploceus philippinus)

Seasonal visitor, usually seen during the rainy season.

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Birding in the B.A.R.C. Forest with Dr. Salim Ali, by Syed Asad Akhtar, Field Biologist, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay - 400 023

September 1st 1978, went down as a red letter day in the history of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) located at Trombay, Bombay. On this day the scientists of the Centre had the rare privilege of listening to the world renowned ornithologist, the late Dr. Salim Ali. The enthusiasm and interest shown by the scientists of the Centre can be judged from the fact that the 2000 seat auditorium was filled to capacity with quite a few people sitting on the floor. Besides, some had to be regretfully refused admission.

During the course of the talk which was heard in pin drop silence, Dr. Salim Ali revealed that until recent times ornithologists were scorned at by their contemporaries in other fields. Field Ornithology, especially was considered a waste of time and effort. This attitude was widely prevalent during the 1920's. But ornithologists like Dr. Erwin Stresemann, established through their pioneering effort that field ornithology could contribute as much - if not more - as laboratory ornithology. This was further substantiated when the 1973 Nobel prize for medicine was shared by two ornithologists, Dr. Konrad Lorenz and Dr. Niko Tinbergen, better known as the grandmasters of ethology along with Dr. Von Frisch, another renowned ethologist. This prize and numerous other awards and distinctions before it, had the desired effect of putting things in the proper perspective.

Another aspect of ornithology that Dr. Salim Ali emphasised in his talk is the economic importance of birds, with respect to agriculture. To elucidate his point, he cited the example of the Owl which is generally considered a bad omen throughout the country. An Owl during its nocturnal forays consumes a variety of insects besides its daily food quota which invariably consists of mice. It has been estimated theoretically that if a pair of mice were to be left unharmed, they would multiply to 860 mice in a year, provided there were no mortalities. Thus, theoretically it has destroyed so many mice in one night. He further quoted the findings of a research conducted in the Indus Valley in the pre-partition days which revealed that the damage caused to paddy cultivation by rodents was worth 24 lacs of rupees. This in the days when paddy was available at Re.1 per maund. Seen in this context, birds play a very vital role in our agrology.

Prior to the talk, Dr. Salim Ali led an enthusiastic band of birdwatchers on a sort of birdwatching-cum-nature ramble through the forests of the BARC. The nature trail covered a major part of the BARC forests and followed a steep incline of the Trombay Hills (Highest point, c.300 mts. above MSL), which form a part of the Salsette region. Readers will be surprised to know that the last tiger to be shot in the precincts of Bombay city, was shot in these hills in the year 1907. This area was and still is better know as 'Pir Pau' after a muslim saint whose dargah in the hills is still frequented.

The above trail led to a dilapidated Portugese church which was especially sought to be visited by Dr. Salim Ali. He wished to see the spotted owlets, which were reported to be roosting in the church. These owlets had been recorded in the same place, during his ornithological surveys of the Salsette region about four decades back! But unfortunately, not a single specimen could be observed. The nature ramble turned out to be unproductive birdwise, as it rained intermittently during the course of the 90 minute walk through the lush forests of the BARC complex. We could just observe eighteen species of birds.

This birdwatching-cum-lecture trip had a rather interesting sequel. On one of my visits to Dr. Salim Ali's place at Pali Hill, I suggested, during the course of my conversation with him that why does not the Government take up afforestation of the Trombay Hills. He appreciated my suggestion, but said that these hills were too eroded to support such a scheme and hence it would not be feasible. I had the temerity to argue that in my opinion it would still be feasible, as I had seen patches of fresh plantations being maintained by the BARC in these hills. So finally, the conversation ended there and I came back with an unsatisfied question, which was perhaps guessed by Dr. Salim Ali.

A few months later he informed me that a birdwatching programme had been arranged in the BARC forests and invited me to join him. It was then that I realised, that he had not ignored my suggestion regarding afforestation in the Trombay Hills. His openminded approach to suggestions and questions stumped me. He could have easily brushed my question aside but gave me a chance to see and judge things for myself. During the visit, he too took pains to show me the well maintained parks and gardens of the BARC.

Interestingly, the BARC forest was almost non-existent till about 25 years back. The original forest cover was wiped out by fuel hungry villagers, who had taken advantage of the "Transitory period" when the area was being transferred to the Central Goverhment. The area that had been inherited as a barren waste, has been painstakingly re-forested by the Cosmetic Landscape and Parks Division of the BARC.

The BARC complex occupies an area of about 3000 acres, of which about 1800 acres are parks, forests and marshland. The parks require a daily intake of 3000 gallons of water. This requirement is met from a chain of nine artificial reservoirs which have been made by damming the valleys and natural depressions in the hills. These reservoirs store the season's rain water, the quantity being sufficient to last till the next monsoon. A few reservoirs have been very imaginatively laid out at the foothills. These hold water throughout the year, due to percolation from the higher reservoirs which dry up rather early.

It was indeed a pleasure and a surprise to see such lush forests on the edge of a heavily industrialized belt and the varied avifauna it supports. More than 100 species of birds have been identified in this small area. But what struck me most was the successful afforestation programme undertaken by the BARC authorities on a supposedly hostile terrain.

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Winter Habitat and Feeding Activities of the Demoiselle Crane in Areas of North Karnataka, by Dr. J.C. Uttangi, Mission Compound, Dharwad.

The smallest of cranes with the largest number of breeding populations so far known in the entire world is the Demoiselle crane. It is also called the dainty little grey crane of Asia that migrates to India and Africa during winter from the Steppe lands of Southern Europe, Central and Northern Asia. Unlike all other cranes which have a crown of head unfeathered or bare, and for which they are ranked under a single genus 'Grus'; the Demoisells crane having a crown of head fully feathered is brought under a separate genus and species namely "Anthropoides virgo". Because of this special characteristic feature, the crane enjoys not only a distinct taxonomic status but also its typical flight, voice, dance and large assemblage tendency in wide open wetland habitat's have particularly attracted the admiration and applause of many a birder, villagers and others in our country. More especially its feeding style and local dispersal order are worth noting and video-recording. I had a rare opportunity to witness and study the activities of a few feeding flocks in the cultivated fields near Saudatti and Haveri in North Karnataka, while engaged in the midwinter water fowl census programmes organised in India for the first time in Jan. 1987, and again this year in Jan.1988. The present note is the outsome of this study made on both occasions.

In North Karnataka, in addition to paddy crops, the other winter Rabi crops available for these birds to feed upon are jawar, wheat, gram and pulses. Few people still believe that the Demoiselle craneswintering in India do not attack crops but feed upon grasshoppers and other insects including caterpillars. This is not true because cranes adapted to Steppe grass and cultivated habitats do not depend on limited diet but feed upon a variety of food stuffs like worms, snails, insects, grains, caterpillars, plant materials and sometimes frogs, lizards and even mice. At the same time it does not establish that these birds need this entire range of food variety every day but they may choose to ingest and digest only one type of food if that is available abundantly during a particular part of the season and which also may depend on the age of the bird and its nutritional requirements. The birds may choose only grains because it is abundant or only caterpillars or sometimes both depending on their needs. In a field near Saudatti, flocks of Demoiselle cranes were found feeding on oil seeds (carthamus tinctorius) called 'Kusube' in Kanarese, and these they made to drop off from drying pods by shaking the herbs with the help of their body and spread out wings. In another instance near Haveri, the birds went through in line with wings opened out and used them as hands for bending down the spikes of the millet crop or Jawar (sorghum vulgare) to peck grains from the so bent down spikes, or used their long stretched necks at spikes which were within their reach. This style of attack speaks of their behaviour during feeding and

selection of a wanted food. The choice of fatty food like oil seeds has definitely a nutritional value to these migrating birds as they will be later required to produce healthy and productive eggs when they return back to their breeding grounds. In the evolution of food habits the kind of food eaten by a species also depends on the family trait which the young birds usually acquire through parental training to select a food that is staple to the diet. Non-staple or emergency foods are not sustentative. Whatever may be the reason, field observations of feeding behaviour of birds in natural environment is desirable.

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Bird Life of India, by Madhav Gadgil & R.J. Ranjit Daniels (Contd.)
Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore - 560 012

Extinctions

Diversification and extinction have proceeded concurrently throughout the history of life on earth, the steady increase of diversity implying that the former has more than kept up with the latter. Rates of these processes are best known for marine animals, and the overall rates of extinction have tended to actually decrease with increasing levels of diversity. There have, however, been some episodes of far higher rates of extinction, the mass extinctions. The Permian extinction, for example, in which 52% of marine families disappeared, may have involved the demise of as many as 96% of all marine species. Such episodes probably owe themselves to some astronomical events, perhaps showers of comets or bursts of volcanic activity, that trigger the spread of a huge dust cloud or poisonous gases. Other spasms of extinction, especially in the more recent epochs, have related to the waxing and waning of the ice sheets over the earth.

The birds too have experienced the waxing and waning of their diversity over their history of 150 million years, a mere 4% of the time elapsed since the origin of life. With their light and hollow bones birds are poorly preserved in the fossil record, so we cannot be certain of the number of species that have gone extinct, although one estimate puts it as high as one million, a ratio of 1 : 100. We can be more sure, however, that as many as nine families of birds have gone extinct during geological times. These include that of the first bird, Archaeopteryx, a neat connecting link between the reptiles and birds, five other families of flightless birds and three of oceanic flying birds. Of the more recent spectacular extinctions, one may mention the giant moas and elephant birds which stood over 3 m. in height during the 17th century from New Zealand. By and large, in spite of a few surviving species like the ostriches and emus birds have been unsuccessful in filling the niche of large land animals, now a monopoly of mammals like us.

The pace of extinctions has undoubtedly risen dramatically in the last few centuries with the development of modern transport and weapons, and the last 300 years have witnessed 153 extinctions of bird species. A good proportion of these were flightless island birds that were either hunted by man or were outcompeted by mammals introduced by him into their habitats. There were, however, other victims, especially in North America, of the bloodthirst of European colonizers. The most notable of these was the Passenger Pigeon,

over one billion of which were believed to have been in existence in 19th century. But they congregated in the breeding season, where they fell an easy prey to the modern weaponry. As many as 15 lakh were shipped just in one year in 1861 from a single colony in Michigan.

What of the Indian subcontinent? We know little of the changes that might have been wrought by the agricultural colonization that began more than 5000 years ago. But we know that the slaughter of wildlife launched under the British Raj claimed two victims, the Pinkheaded Duck and the Mountain Quail. Both were game birds, the former was partial to wetlands, a major threatened habitat, and the latter had a very narrow geographical range.

These rates of one species per two year over the last 3 centuries, are between 100 to 1000 times higher than the rates that prevailed during geological history. What does the future have in store for us? The prospects may be very grim indeed, now that the changes on the surface of the earth affected by modern man are really gathering an incredible momentum. Changes in habitats, especially tropical forests, are now proceeding very rapidly, as is the poisoning of the biosphere with pesticides and a myriad other synthetic chemicals. We are therefore very likely on the threshold of a new extinction spasm in which one million species may go extinct by the end of the twentieth century, which implies rates of extinction 10 to 100 thousand times those that prevailed in the geological past. It is therefore imperative that we seriously look into the question of how biological diversity is created, maintained and destroyed. Such an understanding is crucial if we are not to watch helplessly a spasm, perhaps as overwhelming as that of Permian extinctions, overtaking the earth in the near future, if we are to assume properly the evolutionary responsibility of our own species.

(To be continued)

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Correspondence:

Termites on Lapwing Eggs, by Dhanraj Malik, 1 Kinner Spts, Opp. Vijay Park, Commerce College, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad - 380 009

As I had told you that there were white ants on the eggs of the yellow wattled lapwing, and as you were interested in the same, I went the other day and checked about the same and discovered that out of the 4 eggs there was only one chick - the rest had holes in them. I have also got one egg with me which has got white ants on it. The inner yolk has been eaten away by the ants.

Hence I can conclude that even when there were white ants in the nest, if the female sits on them, there are chances that out of 4 eggs at least one may hatch. Hence, white ants could not destroy all the eggs, though the remaining 3 eggs have become empty from inside.

I hope this information can be published in your magazine as it shows that white ants could not destroy all the eggs. It also informs us that though there were white ants in the nest the eggs hatched, and it also tells us that

because of the white ants the birds did not stop hatching the eggs. If you want the egg for further studies I can send it to you.

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Spotbills Galore by S. Theodore Baskaran, 124 Ashoka Pillar Road, Bangalore - 560 011

I would like to share with the readers my observations on an unusually large congregation of spotbills.

On 23.6.88, I was motoring on the Mysore-Somnathpur road at 3.30 p.m. On the 11th km. is the lake Anikare. In fact, the road is laid on the lake bund. This is not a very large lake. On the lake I saw 98 spotbills. Some were feeding, some swimming about listlessly and some resting with their heads tucked under a wing and the red legs tucked up, clearly visible above the surface of water. The spotbills were quite close to the road and were a picture of security and trust. Evidently there has been no disturbance from the many hunters from Mysore.

Before this excitement could subside, I came across another congregation. Travelling further ahead, past Somnathpur, I saw another lake on the right side of the road, just past the village of Kakkalipura. This time I counted 36. Here they were seen with median egrets, cotton teals, coots and ibises.

Returning to Bangalore, I checked up the books and all of them say that spotbills are seen in pairs and rarely in small groups of not more than a dozen. The books also said that they are not seen in the company of other birds.

I did come across one record which talked about a large congregation. Major Wood, of the Indian Medical Service, writing in 1920, says that at Kurram path, near Imphal in North-Eastern India, he saw about 100 spotbills in one lake. But this he says was a breeding ground and he saw many flappers along with the adult ducks in the lake. The Handbook talks of a gathering of 200 spotbills in Neill island in Andamans, but does not say whether this was a breeding ground and if the ducks were a different sub-species.

I would like to end this note with one observation on such sightings. Whenever a phenomenon, not recorded in the books or different from what is recorded in the books, is reported, our tendency is to react with scepticism. I agree that a certain degree of scepticism is necessary for scientific enquiry. But one could stretch it too far in one's reverence for the printed word.

Recently I had reported the sighting of a Great Indian Bustard by a pilot who was landing in Sulur airfield in 1976. A fellow-birder wrote to me and suggested that what the pilot - a knowledgeable birder - had seen could have been a peafowl!

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Some information on the Shore Birds of Kutch, by S.N. Varu, Junavas, Madhapur, (Kutch - Bhuj) 370 020

Bronzwinged Jacana

In his Birds of Gujarat by Salin Ali, there is a record of these birds at Hamirsar Tank, Bhuj, in June 1937. This bird was seen again in Bhuj taluk on 21.1.87. and thus it has reappeared in Kutch after 47 years.

Crab Plover

Salim Ali reported that this bird was shot at Mandvi on 25.1.1887. Thereafter it seems to have disappeared, but I have seen this bird at Bagthara Island on 14.6.86. It is cheering that the bird has reappeared after so many years.

Ringed Plover

Salim Ali did not record this bird during his survey in 1945, but the bird was seen at Hamirsar Tank of Bhuj on 2.8.78.

Small Indian Pratincole

This species has not been recorded in the literature on Birds in Kutch, but Shri Himmatsinhji saw 6 birds at Devisar Tank in Bhuj on 4.3.84. Some birds were seen again on 8.11.87.

Dusky Redshank

This bird has only recently made its appearance in Kutch, and is now a regular winter visitor.

Eastern Knot

The BNHS Ringing Party ringed 8 birds between 1.12.70. and 2.3.71. and this is a new record for Kutch.

Sanderling

Though Salim Ali was unable to see this bird, he mentioned that Iester had seen it on the shores of the Gulf of Kutch. I saw this bird at Mandvi on 14.11.78. This also is now a regular winter visitor.

Broadbilled Sandpiper

Though Salim Ali did not come across this bird during the Kutch survey, the BNHS Ringing Party ringed as many as 299 birds at Jakhau seashore between 1.12.70. and 2.3.71.

It is difficult to say whether these birds are actually new arrivals or whether it is the more intensive surveys and the additional advantage of mist netting which has led to their observation during these years.

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ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯ ಅವಿರ್ಭಾವ, ಅಂದೊಂದು ಅಪೂರ್ವ ಸನ್ನಿವೇಶ. ಅವರು ಹೊಸ ವಾತಾವರಣದ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಸ್ಪರ್ಶ ಮಾಡಿದ ವಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಶಕ್ತಿ. ಆ ಸ್ಪರ್ಶದಿಂದ ನಮ್ಮ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದ ಹರಡು ಮತ್ತಷ್ಟು ವಿಸ್ತಾರವಾಯಿತು. ಆ ದಿವ್ಯ ಚೇತನದ ಉಜ್ವಲ ಪ್ರಕಾಶದಿಂದ ನಮ್ಮ ಕಣ್ಣುಗಳನ್ನು ಕವಿದಿದ್ದ ಕತ್ತಲೆಯು ತೆರೆ ಸರಿಯಿತು. ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ ಅಂತರಿಕ್ಷದಿಂದ ಇಳಿದು ಬಂದವರಲ್ಲ. ಭಾರತದ ಕೋಟಿ ಕೋಟಿ ಜನರ ನಡುವೆ ಉದಿಸಿ ಬಂದವರು.

—ಜವಾಹರಲಾಲ್ ನೆಹರು

ಜವಾಹರಲಾಲ್ ನೆಹರು, ಸರ್ದಾರ್‌ಪಟೇಲ್, ಸುಭಾಷ್‌ಚಂದ್ರಬೋಸ್, ಸರೋಜಿನಿನಾಯ್ಡು, ಜಯಪ್ರಕಾಶ್‌ನಾರಾಯಣ್ ಮೊದಲಾದ ಮಹಾನ್ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಯೋಧರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಭಾರತದ ವೈಭವಪೂರ್ಣ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಧ್ಯೇಯಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರದ ಸಹಸ್ರ, ಸಹಸ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯ ಜನತೆಗೆ ಸ್ಫೂರ್ತಿ ನೀಡಿ, ಹುರಿದುಂಬಿಸಿದ ಅದ್ಭುತ ದಾರ್ಶನಿಕ ಚೇತನ, ಮಹಾತ್ಮಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ.

ತಮ್ಮ ಅಪೂರ್ವ ತ್ಯಾಗ ಮತ್ತು ಬಲಿದಾನದಿಂದ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯವನ್ನು ತಂದುಕೊಟ್ಟ ಹುತಾತ್ಮರಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ದಿನದಂದು ಶ್ರದ್ಧಾಂಜಲಿಯನ್ನರ್ಪಿಸುವುದು ನಮ್ಮ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯ. ಇದು ಒಂದು ಸಂಭ್ರಮದ ದಿನ, ನಿಜ. ಆದರೆ ಅದರೊಂದಿಗೇ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಪದದ ಪೂರ್ಣವಾದ ಅರ್ಥವನ್ನು ಅರಿತುಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ದಿನವೂ ಹೌದು, ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ನಾವು ಮರೆಯಬಾರದು.

ಕಳೆದ ಐದು ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯ ವಿವಿಧ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಮ್ಮೆಪಟ್ಟುಕೊಳ್ಳುವಂತಹ ಸಾಧನೆ ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಒಟ್ಟು ಜನತೆಯ ಕ್ಷೇಮಾಭ್ಯುದಯಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಹಲವಾರು ಪ್ರಗತಿಪರ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಗೊಳಿಸಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಮುನ್ನಡೆಯ ಹಾದಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಂಚೂಣಿಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ರಾಜ್ಯ.

ಕುಟುಂಬ ಯೋಜನೆ ಕುಟುಂಬ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನದಲ್ಲಿ 1986-87ರಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇ. 91.3 ರಷ್ಟು ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಸಾಧಿಸಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಚಿಕ್ಕ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಆದರ್ಶಕ್ಕೆ ಮಾದರಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಕಳೆದ ಐದು ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 50 ಸಾವಿರ ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳನ್ನು ಕೊರೆದಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ದಾಖಲೆಯ ನಿರ್ಮಿಸಿದೆ.

ಪಂಪುಸೆಟ್ಟುಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಕೆ ಪಂಪು ಸೆಟ್ಟುಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರೈಸುವ ವಿಚಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಗುರಿ ಮೀರಿದ ಸಾಧನೆಯಾಗಿದೆ.

ಖುಷ್ಕಿಭೂಮಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಖುಷ್ಕಿಭೂಮಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗಾಗಿ ವೈಜ್ಞಾನಿಕ ಯೋಜನೆ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಇರುವ ಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲಗಳನ್ನು ಸಮರ್ಥವಾಗಿ ಬಳಸಿ, ಕೃಷಿ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಧಿಕ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಿದೆ. ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತು ಅಂಶಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಒಳ್ಳೆಯ ಸಾಧನೆ ತೋರಿದೆ.

ಜನತೆಯ ಕೈಗೇ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿಯ 'ಗ್ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯ'ದ ಕಲ್ಪನೆಯನ್ನು ಕೃತಿಗಿಳಿಸಿ ಪಂಚಾಯತಿರಾಜ್ಯ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಜಾರಿಗೆ ತಂದಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣದ ಹಾದಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ದಿಟ್ಟ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆಯನ್ನಿಟ್ಟಿರುವ ರಾಜ್ಯ. ಈಗ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಜನತೆಯ ಕೈಗೇ ಅಧಿಕಾರ. ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ರೂಪಿಸುವವರೂ ಅವರೇ, ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಗೊಳಿಸುವ ಹೊಣೆಯೂ ಅವರದೇ.

ಚುನಾವಣಾ ಸುಧಾರಣೆ ಹಲವಾರು ಚುನಾವಣಾ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಜಾರಿಗೆ ತಂದಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪ್ರಜಾಪ್ರಭುತ್ವ ತತ್ವವನ್ನು ಅನ್ವರ್ಥಗೊಳಿಸಿದೆ.

ಸ್ವಚ್ಛ ಆಡಳಿತ ಅಧಿಕಾರದ ದುರುಪಯೋಗ ಮತ್ತು ಭ್ರಷ್ಟಾಚಾರವನ್ನು ತಡೆಗಟ್ಟಿ. ಆಡಳಿತ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಸ್ವಚ್ಛತೆ ಮ[illegible] ದಕ್ಷತೆಯನ್ನು ಮೂಡಿಸುವ ಸಲುವಾಗಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಒಂದು ಆದರ್ಶ ನಿರ್ಧಾರ, ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತದ ರಚನೆ.

ಬಡತನ, ಅನಕ್ಷರತೆ, ಅಜ್ಞಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಶೋಷಣೆಗಳ ನಿರ್ಮೂಲನಕ್ಕೆ ನಿರಂತರ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿರುವ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ, ಜನತೆಯ ವಿಶ್ವಾಸದೊಂದಿಗೇ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಸಮಾನತೆಯನ್ನು ಸಾಧಿಸುವ ದೃಢವಿಶ್ವಾಸವನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿದೆ.